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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Quality Guides for Buying Coats

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of ~~Home Economics~~, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Tuesday, October 30, 1934.

--ooOoo--

MR. SALISBURY: Well, Miss Van Deman, are you going to be frivolous and give us a grand Halloween menu today? Cider, and doughnuts, 'n everything?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Good gracious, I don't believe I have a party idea in my head. Anyway, it's only the ghosts who walk tomorrow night. Ghosts aren't interested in food.

MR. SALISBURY: Oh, aren't they!

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, let me see. How about hot spiced cider with toasted cheese sandwiches or doughnuts?

MR. SALISBURY: Any objection to both?

MISS VAN DEMAN: No, indeed, not in the least.

MR. SALISBURY: How do you fix that hot spiced cider?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Oh, that's easy. Just take sweet cider and two or three hours before you want to serve it, drop in a little cheesecloth bag of spices (whole cloves, and stick cinnamon, and a few whole allspice). Then for each gallon of cider, add about a cup of sugar, and heat the cider to the boiling point. As soon as it comes to a boil, take it off the stove and let it stand with the spices in it until you're ready to serve refreshments. Then heat the cider again, and pour it hot into glasses. As you pass this hot spiced cider to your guests, the whole room will be filled with a delicious fragrance. I think everybody will want a second or maybe a third glass.

MR. SALISBURY: I'm sure I will. And it seems to me for a lady who hadn't a Halloween idea in her head, you've done pretty well.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, sir. And now may I talk about winter coats?

MR. SALISBURY: Men's coats, or women's coats?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Women's this time. Clarice Scott, the same Clarice Scott who wrote that interesting leaflet on "Quality guides in buying ready-made dresses" is concentrating on coats now. I've just been talking to her, and she's told me a great deal about the outside and the inside of coats - points to look for in judging the quality.

I know when I go to buy a coat myself, I always feel I have to take a great deal on faith. So much of the workmanship on a coat is hidden under the lining. And as for the fabric, I've never yet seen a label on a coat that told me out-and-out whether the fabric was all pure wool, or part wool and part something else.

(over)

MR. SALISBURY: No, I've never seen any like that on men's coats either. But I do wish we had 'em. Well, how do you decide what kind of a coat material to buy?

MISS VAN DEMAN: First I make up my mind whether I want a fine dressy looking fabric or a rough-and-ready one to stand the knocks of everyday wear. You know a real fine wool put into a very fine fabric maybe very beautiful and cost a lot of money but it just won't stand the punishment a coat gets when you wear it day in and day out. Some of these fine fabrics are worsted and some are woolens.

MR. SALISBURY: Just what do you mean by worsted and woolen? Are they two different things?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes. Worsteds are made of the longest fibers from the sheep's back, all combed out so that the yarns are smooth and each one shows up distinctly in the fabric. A serge is a typical worsted. A genuine tweed is another worsted made of coarser, heavier yarns.

A woolen is heavier than a worsted and the yarns are felted together, or napped, or finished in some other way that makes the yarns less distinct. A velour is a typical napped woolen material. The fibers in a woolen cloth are shorter and rougher than in a worsted. If they're not too short and the cloth is firm and well made, you have a very durable material, warmer than a worsted but not so smooth.

Of course there are good woolens and poor woolens, and the same is true of worsteds. Look twice before you choose a coat of one of the very heavy felted woolens offered you at a low price. See if you can pluck out the fibers easily, and if the yarns are made up of a collection of miscellaneous fibers. In a fabric like this, it's very easy to put in stray bits of cotton and other short waste fibers that will rub right out when you begin to wear your coat.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, what about some of these queer-looking materials in women's coats? I saw one the other day that made me think of the bark of a tree.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Oh, yes, every season brings its novelties. Each one has its own fancy name that nobody can remember by the next year. But I generally steer clear of novelties. There are always plenty of good standard tried-and-true coat fabrics to choose from. I like to get the most out of my money; so I let somebody else experiment with the novelties. And if I am tempted, I always try to judge them by the same general rules I use on other fabrics. For instance, a coat fabric with long loose yarns on the surface "floats" the textile people call them will be sure to catch and snag. And a fabric with an open sleazy weave will pull out wherever there is a strain, and how the wind will whistle through it when the blizzards come. Then a coat with a fine fuzzy nap will soon show wear on the cuffs and around the pockets.

MR. SALISBURY: I'll say it does. I've seen plenty of coats like that. And I've heard lots of talk about coat linings.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, I always feel the lining with my fingers and look at it carefully. But if it's silk I can't actually tell whether it's pure-dye or weighted. And I can't exactly snip out a piece of a coat lining and take it off and burn it the way I do with a sample of yard goods.

I'm happy to say there are some labels on rayon coat linings this fall. In a number of tweeds and other sports coats Miss Scott is finding rayon linings guaranteed to be perspiration proof and said "to last the life of the garment." Well now "perspiration proof", everybody knows what that means. But just what does "last the life of the garment" mean? A lot of room for argument on that I think. The life of a coat to one person may be one, two, or three years and to somebody else, four, five, or six years. Anyway, I'm glad that manufacturers of rayon coat linings are putting on labels that give some facts, if only one or two.

I've heard about one company that makes a point of using only pre-shrunk materials in its coats - materials that have been out through the shrinking process time and again until they won't shrink any more. But apparently that coat manufacturer has never thought how much it would mean to the women who buy his coats to have a neat little label that said "all fabrics in this garment completely shrunk". Or if he doesn't want to make it quite that strong, then he might say "guaranteed not to shrink more than one or two percent," or whatever it might be.

MR. SALISBURY: Oh, yes. Just like the pre-shrunk fabrics for shirts.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, precisely. Well, as usual when I get to talking about labels on textiles, I forget about the clock. Time's almost up, I see, and I haven't said a word about the inner lining in a coat, or about fur collars, or about buttons and fastenings, or about the stitching. Those are all very important in the wear you get out of a coat. Also there's a lot in the way a lining is put in - whether by machine or by hand. To say nothing of the cut of the coat itself. Unless you can buy a new coat every season or two, one with a conservative cut will give you a lot more satisfaction.

MR. SALISBURY: Miss Van Deman, before you sign off, may I check on one point?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, certainly. Go ahead.

MR. SALISBURY: You mentioned Miss Scott's leaflet on ready-made dresses. Can people still get that by writing to you?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, indeed. Just write me a card and ask for "Quality guides in buying ready-made dresses."

And good-bye, Everybody, for this time.

